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(54) Title: SLOT MACHINE GAME AND SYSTEM WITH IMPROVED JACKPOT FEATURE

(57) Abstract

A plurality of electronic gaming machines (10) are connected to a network (11), to which a feature jackpot controller (12) and display means (13) are also connected. Each of the electronic gaming machines (10) are provided with a network interface arranged to provide a signal onto the network (11) on each occurrence of an operation of a respective machine and the jackpot controller (12) is arranged to receive each of the machine operation signals and to increment the value of a random jackpot prize on the occurrence of each of these operation signals. Prior to each game, the gaming machine (10) selects a random number from a range of numbers and during each game, the machine allocates the first n numbers in the range, where n is the number of credits bet by the player in that game. At the end of the game, the randomly selected number is compared with the numbers allocated to the player and if a match occurs the particular machine is switched into a feature game mode in which a jackpot game is played for all or part of the incremental jackpot prize.

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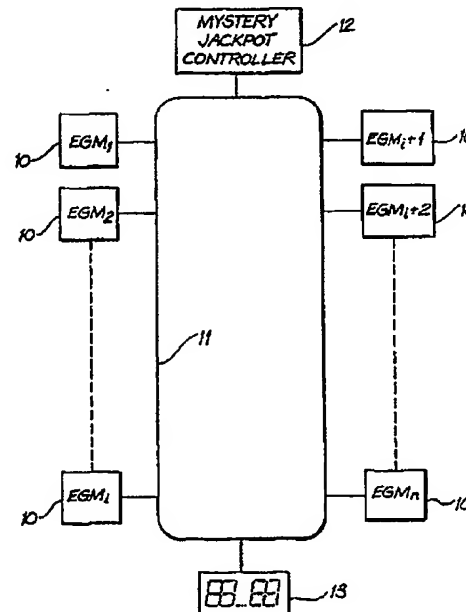
Slot machine game and system with improved jackpot feature

Introduction

The present invention relates to apparatus for use with a system of
linked poker machines and in particular the apparatus provides an improved
jackpot mechanism for use with such a poker machine system.

Background of the Invention

Many schemes have been devised in the past to induce players to play
slot machines including schemes such as specifying periods during which
jackpot prizes are increased or bonus jackpots paid. Other schemes involve
awarding an additional prize to a first player to achieve a predetermined
combination on a poker machine. These methods, while effective. add to
club overheads because of the need for additional staff to ensure that the
scheme is operated smoothly.

More recently. with the advent of poker machines linked through
electrical networks it has been possible to automatically generate jackpot
prizes on the basis of information received from the machines being played
which are connected to the system and one such prior art arrangement,
commonly known as "Cashcade™", counts turnover on all machines in the
network. increments a prize value in accordance with the turnover and pays
the jackpot prize when the count reaches some predetermined and randomly
selected number. In a more recent prior art arrangement. each game played
on each machine in a gaming system is allocated a randomly selected
number and the prize is awarded to a machine when the game number it is
allocated matches a preselected random number.

In another recent prior art arrangement, the winning machine is
selected by randomly selecting a number at a point in time and decrementing
the number as games played on the system are counted until the number is
decremented to zero at which time the game (or associated machine) causing
the final decrement is awarded the jackpot.

With some prior art combination based trigger arrangements there is a
serious disadvantage in that the player betting a single token per line, is just
as likely to achieve a jackpot as the player playing multiple tokens per line.
This has the effect of encouraging players playing for the bonus jackpot to bet
in single tokens. rather than betting multiple tokens per game.

Jackpot games have traditionally been popular in Casinos. However, in their conventional format these games have inherent limitations:

(i)   Games which use specific combinations of symbols to trigger jackpots are perceived by many players as being unwinnable. The games are typically designed in such a way that the big jackpots should not be won until large amounts are accumulated. With such low frequency the jackpots are never seen to be won by most players. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many players have learnt to disregard the chance of winning the major jackpots and are realistically playing for the lesser jackpots (ie the minor and mini jackpots). The increasing popularity of small mystery jackpots with higher frequencies of occurrence tends to support this argument;

(ii)   Due to the increasing demand of players for a more complex and diverse game range, conventional jackpot games with combination triggers have become superseded. However, it is extremely complex to develop a wide variety of combinations which support both a feature game and mathematically exact jackpot triggers;

(iii)   Typically, it would be expected that the game return (RTP) is independent of the number of coins bet per line. With conventional progressive jackpot games though, increasing the credits bet per line creates a relative disadvantage as far as RTP is concerned. Lets say the start-up amount for a feature jackpot is $10000. A player who is playing 1 credit per line has a chance for $10000 for each credit played, whereas a player playing 5 credits per line only has a chance for $2000 for each credit played. This creates a scale of diminishing returns. The smart player who gambles for the feature jackpot only, will always cover all playlines, but will only bet 1 credit per line because the prize paid for the feature jackpot is the same irrespective of the bet. This is supported by data collected from casinos,

(iv)   Typical combination triggered progressive jackpots have fixed hit rates which removes from the operator's control the ability to vary jackpot frequency.

These arrangements have been in use in the State of New South Wales and in other jurisdictions for a considerable period of time, however, as with other aspects of slot machine games, players become bored with such arrangements and new and more innovative schemes become necessary in order to stimulate player interest.

In this specification, the term "combinations" will be used to refer to the mathematical definition of a particular game. That is to say, the combinations of a game are the probabilities of each possible outcome for that game.

Summary of the Invention

According to a first aspect the present invention provides a random prize awarding feature to selectively provide a feature outcome on a gaming console, the console being arranged to offer the feature outcome when a game has achieved a trigger condition, the console including trigger means arranged to test for a trigger condition and to initiate the feature outcome when the trigger condition occurs, the trigger condition being determined by an event having a probability related to credits bet per game on the console.

According to a second aspect, the present invention provides a random prize awarding system associated with a network of gaming consoles, the system being arranged to offer a feature outcome on a particular console when a trigger condition occurs as a result of a game being played on the respective console the prize awarding system including trigger means arranged to test for a trigger condition and to initiate the feature outcome on the respective console when the trigger condition occurs, the trigger condition being determined by an event having a probability related to credits bet per game on the respective console.

According to a third aspect, the present invention provides a gaming console including a random prize awarding feature to produce a feature outcome , the gaming console being arranged to offer the feature outcome when a game has achieved a trigger condition, the console including trigger means arranged to test for the trigger condition and to initiate the feature outcome when the trigger condition occurs, the trigger condition being determined by an event having a probability related to credits bet per game on the console.

Preferably, the trigger condition is determined by an event having a probability related both to expected turnover between consecutive occurrences of the trigger condition, on the respective console and the credits bet on the respective game.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the trigger condition is determined by selecting a random number from a predetermined range of numbers to be associated with each bought game, and for each credit bet on the respective game, allotting to the game, one or more numbers from the predetermined range of numbers, and in the event that one of the numbers allotted to the player matches the randomly selected number, indicating that the trigger condition has occurred.

In one embodiment, one or more gaming consoles are connected in a gaming network, each of the consoles including signal output means arranged to produce an output signal in response to operation of the respective console, such that a central feature jackpot system connected to the network provides an incrementing jackpot which is increased in response to signals from the consoles connected to the network.

Preferably also, the console is arranged to play a first main game and the feature outcome initiated by the trigger condition is a second feature game.

The function of triggering a feature jackpot game may either be performed by a central feature game controller or may be performed within each console in the system.

In the preferred embodiment, the predetermined range of numbers is determined as a function of expected turnover between consecutive occurrences of the trigger condition, expected jackpot amounts and jackpot frequencies and will equal the expected average turnover per machine between successive initiations of progressive jackpot games divided by the credit value for that machine. For example, if the progressive jackpot is to be played for an average every $5,000 of turnover played and the credit value on the machine is $0.05, then the number range will be 1 to 100,000 (i.e. 5,000/0.05). In the preferred embodiment, the gaming machine will allocate the lowest numbers in the range to the player such that if the player plays 20 credits he will be allocated numbers 1-20 giving him a 1 in 5,000 chance of triggering a jackpot feature game.

Alternatively, the number range can be set to the average expected turnover between jackpot occurrences expressed in cents (500,000 in the above example), in which case the numbers allocated to the player, will be proportional to his total wager expressed in cents (i.e. 1-100 in the above
5   example).

Preferably, the feature game is a simplified game having a higher probability of success than the first game. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the second game is a pseudo-spinning-reel game having a reduced number of symbols on each reel and a jackpot is activated if after
10   spinning the reels a predetermined combination of symbols appears on the win line of each reel. In particular embodiments, 2, 3 or 4 symbols might be provided on each reel.

In one particular example, the second screen game is a five reel game with two different symbols on each reel, however, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 16 pseudo-
15   reel games might be employed. The symbols may be of equal value and equally weighted (i.e. same number of instances) on each reel or alternatively, the prizes might be of different values (eg: different fractions of the pool) and the symbols have different weightings on at least one reel.

Preferably, the prize awarded in a jackpot game by the system of the
20   present invention, is a monetary amount the value of which is incremented with each game played on each gaming machine or console in the system. Alternatively, the incrementation can take place on a per token bet basis.

Where used above, the term 'console' is used to indicate a gaming machine, a gaming terminal or other device arranged to be connected to a
25   communications system and to provide a user gaming interface. In the following description, examples are give which are applicable to traditional slot machines, however the invention should be taken to include gaming systems which include user interfaces other than traditional slot machines.

Brief Description of the Drawings
30   Embodiments of the invention will now be described by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a network of electronic gaming machines to which a mystery jackpot controller according to the present invention is connected;
35   Figure 2 is a flow chart showing a game arrangement according to the invention; and

Figure 3 shows an example of a 5 reel by 3 row window display.

AMENDED SHEET (Article 34) (IPEA/AU)

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, a new jackpot trigger mechanism provides the Casino operator with a far higher degree of flexibility. Unlike conventional combination triggered jackpots, the jackpots
5 here are won from a feature game. The feature game is triggered randomly as a function of credits bet per game. When a feature is triggered, a feature game appears. Each jackpot can only be won from this feature game. During the feature game a second set of reel strips appears and a "spin and hold" feature game commences. The feature prize score is calculated by the total
10 of the points appearing on the centre line of all 5 reels.

Feature jackpots in this format exhibit significant differences over previous jackpot systems:

(i)   A jackpot game is provided which is compatible with any existing game combination within an installation independent of the platform,
15 denomination or type of game (eg. slot machines, cards, keno, bingo or pachinko). This will allow for the linking of combinations between game type, platform type and denomination. Using this system, jackpot games can now be developed using specific combinations for the base game which were previously unsuitable for Link Progressive Systems. These games will
20 compete with the appeal of the latest games on the market.

(ii) There is no longer a need to develop mathematically exact combinations in the base game.

(iii) Unlike the multiplier game in combination triggered jackpot embodiments, the present invention provides a direct relationship between
25 the number of credits bet and the probability of winning the jackpot feature game on any one bought game. Betting 10 credits per line will produce ten times as many hits into the feature game than betting 1 credit per line. This is achieved by using a jackpot trigger which is directly related to the wager bet on a respective game and the turnover, instead of using conventional
30 combination triggers.

(iv) Jackpot hit rates can now be changed without making changes to the base game. This was previously not possible using combination triggered jackpots.

(v)   The jackpot feature system can be used across a wide-area-
35 network (WAN), local-area-network (LAN), used as a stand-alone game

independent of a network or used with a mystery jackpot. Flexibility is
available to change combinations at will.

Referring to Figure 1 a plurality of electronic gaming consoles 10 are
connected to a network 11. to which a feature jackpot controller 12 and
5   display means 13 are also connected.

Each of the electronic gaming consoles 10 are provided with a network
interface arranged to provide a signal onto the network 11 on each
occurrence of an operation of a respective console and the jackpot controller
12 is arranged to receive each of the console operation signals and to
10   increment the value of a random jackpot prize on the occurrence of each of
these operation signals.

A flow chart for a prize awarding algorithm is illustrated in Figure 2.

Referring to the algorithm of Figure 2. machine contributions go into
the prize pool as with known prior art jackpot systems. while the overhead
15   display shows the incrementing prize value.

In the EGM. an average value of machine turnover between jackpot
hits. is programmed and is used to randomly generate trigger data for the
jackpot feature games. In step 20 of the algorithm of Figure 2. the actual
number range and therefore probability of a feature jackpot game being
20   awarded will depend upon the value of a credit in the particular machine and
is calculated by dividing the turnover value by the value of a credit (eg..
$5000/$0.05 = 100.000). The average turnover value is fixed for the EGMs
and the random number generator is initialised (see step 20) at startup to
generate numbers from the preprogrammed range determined from that
25   value.

For every game that is played. a random trigger value is selected (see
step 21) in the preprogrammed range as determined from the average
turnover value. When the game is commenced. it is then reported (see step
22) to the controller. which allocates a contribution to the prize pool. Each
30   game is also allotted (see step 23) numbers from the same number range that
from which the random number was selected, one number in the range being
allotted for each credit bet such that the player's probability of being awarded
a jackpot feature game is proportional to the bet.

The previously selected random number is then used as a trigger value
35   and compared with the values allotted to the player, if there is a match (see
step 24) between the trigger value and the player values, the player is given

an opportunity to play a jackpot feature game (see step 25). Alternatively. at step 23. a number is allocated which is equal to. or proportional to the number of credits bet in the respective game and in step 24. the trigger value is compared with the single player value and a jackpot feature awarded if the

5   trigger value is less than or equal to the player value. It will be appreciated that this alternative arrangement is mathematically equivalent to the previously described arrangement. the range of numbers below the allotted number in the alternative arrangement being equivalent to the set of allotted numbers in the previously described arrangement.

10   In the preferred embodiment, a prize is always awarded in the jackpot feature game. the feature game being used to determine the size of the prize to be awarded (see step 27). The winning machine is then locked up (see step 28) and the controller awaits an indication that the prize has been paid before allowing the machine to be unlocked (see step 29). In some

15   embodiments. the machine will not be locked up in steps 28 and 19. but instead the prize will simply be paid and the program will return to step 21. The machine then returns to step (see step 21) and commences a new game. If the trigger value does not match (see step 27) then there is no feature game awarded for that bought game and the machine returns to step (see step 22)

20   and waits for the next game to commence.

By way of example. a feature game might be triggered by an EGM every $5000 of turnover played. which is equivalent to 100.000 credits on a $0.05 machine. This is referred to as the jackpot feature game hit rate in credits. A random number is generated within a prescribed range of numbers at the

25   EGM at the commencement of each bought game. The prescribed range of numbers is determined by the jackpot feature game hit rate which has been determined previously. from typical values of casino turnover, expected jackpot amounts and jackpot frequencies. The prescribed range in this example is therefore 1 to 100.000 and before the commencement of each

30   bought game a random number is generated within this range.

A bet of 20 credits will result in the numbers between 1 and 20 (inclusive) being allotted to the game (note that statistically it does not matter if the numbers are randomly selected or not or allotted as a block or scattered. the probability of a feature game being awarded is unchanged). If

35   the number 7 is produced by the random number generator, then the feature game will be triggered. If any number between 21 and 100,000 is produced

by the random number generator, the feature game will not be triggered.
Similarly, a bet of 200 credits will result in the numbers between 1 and 200
(inclusive) being allotted to the game. If any number between 1 and 200 is
produced by the random number generator, then the feature game will be
5   triggered. If any number between 201 and 100.000 is produced by the
random number generator, the feature game will not be triggered.

The example below has been developed using example turnover data.
A trigger of the second screen feature game is expected every $5000 of
turnover (ie. 100000 credits on a $0.05 machine). Increasing the number of
10   credits bet increases the chance of triggering the feature on any bought game.

Number of credits bet	Range numbers assigned	Games to hit	Bet/game	Turnover of EGM since last hit (S)
1	1 to 1	100000	$0.05	$5000
2	1 to 2	50000	$0.10	S5000
3	1 to 3	33333.33	$0.15	$5000
5	1 to 5	20000	$0.25	$5000
10	1 to 10	10000	$0.50	S5000
15	1 to 15	6666.66	$0.75	$5000
20	1 to 20	5000	$1.00	$5000
25	1 to 25	4000	$1.25	$5000
30	1 to 30	3333.33	$1.50	$5000
40	1 to 40	2500	$2.00	S5000
45	1 to 45	2222.22	$2.25	$5000
50	1 to 50	2000	$2.50	$5000
60	1 to 60	1666.66	$3.00	$5000
75	1 to 75	1333.33	$3.75	$5000
100	1 to 100	1000	$5.00	$5000
150	1 to 150	666.66	$7.50	$5000
200	1 to 200	500	$10.00	$5000

Preferably, when a jackpot feature game is triggered. all players are
alerted by a jackpot bell that a possible grand jackpot is about to be played
15   for. This is done so that all players share in the experience of a jackpot win.
Anecdotal evidence of players watching feature games being played in

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Australian casinos suggests that the drawing power of such games is immense.

Players are alerted by the jackpot bell instantaneously at any point during a game. but the feature game will not appear until the current game
5   (including base game features) are completed.

In this embodiment the feature game appears with the new reel strips already spinning and accompanying feature game tunes playing. The player stops the reels spinning by pressing the corresponding playline buttons in order. The feature prize score is calculated by the total of the points
10 appearing on the centre line of all 5 reels. Across the top of the screen, a sum of the scores is displayed.

The 4 feature prize meters in descending order of value are:

(i)   Grand Feature Prize. A score of $\geq$ 100 wins the grand feature jackpot:

(ii)   Major Feature Prize. A score of 90-99 (inclusive) wins the major feature
15 jackpot:

(iii)   Minor Feature Prize. A score of 80-89 (inclusive) wins the minor feature jackpot:

(iv)   Mini Feature Prize. A score of $\leq$ 79 wins the mini feature jackpot.

By way of example. referring to Figure 3. a 5 reel by 3 row window is
20 displayed. If the reels of the feature game stop on the numbers shown in Figure 3. then the progressive jackpot won is the sum of the numbers on the centre line ie. 12+10+18+13+22 = 75 which is within the range for the mini feature jackpot.

The instant the feature game is completed and the sum of scores from
25 all 5 reels is shown. the feature jackpot screen and signs display which jackpot has been won. This celebration of the jackpot win is conducted in a traditional manner (i.e. flashing displays. jackpot alarms. music etc).

As the time between jackpot game awards is related to turnover, the number of jackpot games played by a player between feature games and
30 hence their chance of winning is directly related to the size of each bet on each game played.

(1)   All machines on the link have a feature game. be it a second screen animation game or a second set of reel strips.

(2)   The link has a number of feature jackpot meters (up to 8). All feature
35 jackpots may be linked.

(3)   The feature game is activated as a function of machine turnover. This means that on average the feature game will occur one in, for example every $5000.00. There are a number of advantages of activating the feature game on turnover. For example, it enables for the first time, a relatively simple

5   mechanism for allowing mixed denomination on a link. The feature game gives the player the chance of winning one of the available feature jackpots if a certain outcome appears. For example, a new set of reel strips might appear with only 2 or 4 different symbols: Jackpot 1, Jackpot 2, or (Jackpot 1, Jackpot 2, Jackpot 3, Jackpot 4). The first time 5 of the same appear on the

10   centre line the stated feature jackpot is won.

(4)   Another advantage of using a random trigger for a feature game, is that it can be applied to any game.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in

15   the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1.   A random prize awarding feature to selectively provide a feature outcome on a gaming console, the console being arranged to offer a feature outcome when a game has achieved a trigger condition, the console including trigger means arranged to test for the trigger condition and to initiate the feature outcome when the trigger condition occurs, the trigger condition being determined by an event having a probability related to desired average turnover between successive occurrences of the trigger conditions on the console.

2.   The prize awarding feature of claim 1, wherein the trigger condition is determined by an event having a probability related both to expected turnover between successive occurrences of the trigger conditions on the console and the credits bet on the respective game.

3.   The prize awarding feature of claim 1 or 2, wherein the console is arranged to play a main game, during which testing for the trigger condition will occur, and the feature outcome initiated by the trigger condition is the awarding of one or more feature games.

4.   The prize awarding feature of claim 3, wherein the main game is a standard game normally offered on the console and each feature game is a jackpot game associated with a special jackpot prize.

5.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the trigger condition is determined by selecting a random number from a predetermined range of numbers to be associated with each main game, and allotting to the game a set of numbers selected from the predetermined range of numbers, the size of the set of allotted numbers being related to the wager bet on the respective game, and in the event that one of the numbers allotted to the game matches the randomly selected number, indicating that the trigger condition has occurred.

6.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the trigger condition is determined by selecting a random number from a predetermined range of numbers to be associated with each main game, and allotting to the game a set of numbers selected from the predetermined range of numbers, the size of the set of allotted numbers being mathematically related to the wager bet on the respective game, and in the event that one of the numbers allotted to the game matches the randomly selected number, indicating that the trigger condition has occurred.

7.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the trigger condition is determined by selecting a random number from a predetermined range of numbers to be associated with each main game, and allotting to the game a number in the set of numbers, the allotted number being proportional to the wager and in the event that the allotted number is greater than or equal to the randomly selected number, indicating that the trigger condition has occurred.

8.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the trigger condition is determined by selecting a random number from a predetermined range of numbers to be associated with each main game, and allotting to the game a number in the set of numbers, the allotted number being inversely proportional to the wager and in the event that the allotted number is less than or equal to the randomly selected number, indicating that the trigger condition has occurred.

9.   The prize awarding feature of claim 7 or 8, wherein the predetermined random number range is related to the desired average turnover on the console between successive initiations of the feature game divided by the unit of credit value for that console.

10.   The prize awarding feature of claim 8 or 9, wherein the set of allotted numbers includes a number for each credit bet on the game.

11.   The prize awarding feature of claim 5 or 6, wherein the predetermined random number range is equal to the desired average turnover on the console between successive initiations of the feature game expressed as a currency denomination.

12.   The prize awarding feature of claim 11, wherein the currency denomination is cents.

13.   The prize awarding feature of claim 11 or 12, wherein the set of allotted numbers includes one number for each unit of the currency denomination wagered on the game.

14.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the gaming console allots a block of numbers within the predetermined range to the game.

15.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in claim 14, wherein the gaming console allots the block of numbers containing the lowest numbers in the predetermined range to the game.

16.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the feature outcome is a simplified game having a higher probability of winning a major prize than in the main game.

17.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in claim 16, wherein the feature game provides a plurality of pseudo-reels with a restricted number of different symbols on each reel and a jackpot is activated if after spinning the reels the same symbol appears on a win line of each reel.

18.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in claim 15, wherein the feature game provides 3, 4 or 5, 6 or 16 pseudo-reels with 2, 3 or 4 different symbols on each reel and a jackpot is activated if after spinning the reels the same symbol appears on a win line of each reel.

19.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in claim 17 or 18, wherein the symbols are of equal value and equally weighted on each reel.

20.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the prizes are of unequal value and the symbols have different weightings on at least one reel.

21.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein one or more gaming consoles are associated with a gaming system, the gaming system comprising a gaming network to which each of the gaming consoles is connected and each gaming console including a signal output means arranged to produce an output signal in response to operation of the respective console, such that a central feature jackpot system connected to the network provides an incrementing jackpot pool which increases in response to signals from the connected consoles and when a feature jackpot game is played on a machine, the feature game results in a feature game outcome selected from a number of possible game outcomes, wherein at least one of the possible game outcomes is an award of a jackpot drawn from the jackpot pool.

22.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in claim 21, wherein the jackpot game results in a game outcome selected from a number of possible game outcomes, wherein all of the possible game outcomes comprise an award of a jackpot drawn from the jackpot pool.

23.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in claim 21 or 22, wherein the jackpot pool is incremented with each game played on each gaming console in the system.

24.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in claim 21 or 22, wherein the jackpot pool is incremented with each token bet on each game played on each gaming console in the system.

25.   A gaming console including a prize awarding feature to produce a feature outcome, the console being arranged to offer the feature outcome when a game has achieved a trigger condition and including trigger means arranged to test for the trigger condition and to initiate the feature outcome when the trigger condition occurs, the trigger condition being determined by an event having a probability related to desired average turnover between successive occurrences of the trigger conditions on the console.

26.   The gaming console of claim 25, wherein the trigger condition is determined by an event having a probability related both to turnover on the console and the credits bet on the respective game.

27.   The gaming console of claim 25 or 26, wherein the console is arranged to play a main game, during which testing for the trigger condition will occur, and the feature outcome initiated by the trigger condition is the awarding of a feature game.

28.   The gaming console of claim 27, wherein the main game is a standard game normally offered on the console and the feature game is a jackpot game associated with a special jackpot prize.

29.   The gaming console of claim 27 or 28, wherein the trigger condition is determined by selecting a random number from a predetermined range of numbers to be associated with each main game, and allotting to the game a set of numbers selected from the predetermined range of numbers, the size of the set of allotted numbers being related to the wager bet on the respective game, and in the event that one of the numbers allotted to the game matches the randomly selected number, indicating that the trigger condition has occurred.

30.   The gaming console of claim 29, wherein the predetermined random number range is related to the desired average turnover on the console between successive initiations of the feature game divided by the credit value for that console.

31.   The gaming console of claim 29 or 30, wherein the set of allotted numbers includes a number for each credit bet on the game.

32.   The gaming console of claim 30, wherein the predetermined random number range is equal to the desired average turnover on the console

between successive initiations of the feature game expressed as a currency denomination.

33.   The gaming console of claim 32, wherein the currency denomination is cents.

34.   The gaming console of claim 32 or 33, wherein the set of allotted numbers includes one number for each unit of the currency denomination wagered on the game.

35.   The gaming console as claimed in any one of claims 25 to 34, wherein the gaming console allots a block of numbers within the predetermined range to the game.

36.   The gaming console as claimed in claim 35, wherein the gaming console allots the block of numbers containing the lowest numbers in the predetermined range to the game.

37.   The gaming console as claimed in any one of claims 25 to 36, wherein the feature outcome is a simplified game having a higher probability of success than the main game.

38.   The gaming console as claimed in claim 37, wherein the feature game provides a plurality of pseudo-reels with a restricted number of different symbols on each reel and a jackpot is activated if after spinning the reels the same symbol appears on a win line of each reel.

39.   The gaming console as claimed in claim 38, wherein the feature game provides 3, 4 or 5, 6 or 16 pseudo-reels with 2, 3 or 4 different symbols on each reel and a jackpot is activated if after spinning the reels the same symbol appears on a win line of each reel.

40.   The gaming console as claimed in claim 38 or 39, wherein the symbols are of equal value and equally weighted on each reel.

41.   The gaming console as claimed in any one of claims 25 to 40, wherein the prizes are of unequal value and the symbols have different weightings on at least one reel.

42.   The gaming console as claimed in any one of claims 25 to 41, wherein the console is arranged to be connected to a gaming network and includes signal output means arranged to produce an output signal in response to operation of the console, such that a central feature jackpot system connected to the network provides an incrementing jackpot pool which increases in response to signals from the connected consoles and the feature

jackpot game is arranged to award a jackpot prize drawn from the jackpot pool.

43.   A method of awarding a prize on a gaming console, the console being arranged to offer a feature outcome when the game has achieved a trigger condition, the method including testing for the trigger condition and when the trigger condition occurs offering the feature outcome, the trigger condition being determined by an event having a probability related to desired average turnover between successive occurrences of the trigger condition on the respective console.

44.   The method of claim 43, wherein the trigger condition is determined by an event having a probability related both to turnover on the console and the credits bet on the respective game.

45.   The method of claim 44, wherein the console is arranged to play a main game, during which testing for the trigger condition will occur, and the feature outcome initiated by the trigger condition is the awarding of a feature game.

46.   The method of claim 45, wherein the main game is a standard game normally offered on the console and the feature game is a jackpot game associated with a special jackpot prize.

47.   The method as claimed in any one of claims 43 to 46, wherein the trigger condition is determined by selecting a random number from a predetermined range of numbers to be associated with each main game, and allotting to the game a set of numbers selected from the predetermined range of numbers, the size of the set of allotted numbers being related to the wager bet on the respective game, and in the event that one of the numbers allotted to the game matches the randomly selected number, indicating that the trigger condition has occurred.

48.   The method of claim 47, wherein the predetermined random number range is related to the desired average turnover on the console between successive initiations of the feature game divided by the credit value for that console.

49.   The method of claim 47 or 48, wherein the set of allotted numbers includes a number for each credit bet on the game.

50.   The method of claim 47, wherein the predetermined random number range is equal to the desired average turnover on the console between

successive initiations of the feature game expressed as a currency denomination.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein the currency denomination is cents.

52. The method of claim 50 or 51, wherein the set of allotted numbers includes one number for each unit of the currency denomination wagered on the game.

53. The method as claimed in any one of claims 43 to 52, wherein the gaming console allots a block of numbers within the predetermined range to the game.

54. The method as claimed in claim 53, wherein the gaming console allots the block of numbers containing the lowest numbers in the predetermined range to the game.

55. The method as claimed in any one of claims 43 to 54, wherein the feature outcome is a simplified game having a higher probability of success than the main game.

56. The method as claimed in claim 55, wherein the feature game provides a plurality of pseudo-reels with a restricted number of different symbols on each reel and a jackpot is activated if after spinning the reels the same symbol appears on a win line of each reel.

57. The method as claimed in claim 56, wherein the feature game provides 3, 4 or 5 pseudo-reels with 2, 3 or 4 different symbols on each reel and a jackpot is activated if after spinning the reels the same symbol appears on a win line of each reel.

58. The method as claimed in claim 56 or 57, wherein the symbols are of equal value and equally weighted on each reel.

59. The method as claimed in any one of claims 56 or 57, wherein the prizes are of unequal value and the symbols have different weightings on at least one reel.

60. The method as claimed in any one of claims 43 to 59, wherein one or more gaming consoles are associated with the method, each of which is connected to a gaming network and includes signal output means arranged to produce an output signal in response to operation of the respective console, such that a central feature jackpot system connected to the network provides an incrementing jackpot pool, the method including increasing the jackpot pool in response to signals from the connected consoles and when the feature

jackpot game on each machine awards a jackpot drawing the jackpot from the jackpot pool.

61.   The method as claimed in claim 60, wherein the jackpot pool is incremented with each game played on each gaming console in the system.

5   62.   The method as claimed in claim 60, wherein the jackpot pool is incremented with each token bet on each game played on each gaming console in the network.   .

63.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 20 wherein one or more gaming consoles are associated with a gaming system,

10   the gaming system comprising a gaming network to which each of the gaming consoles is connected and a central feature jackpot system connected to the network provides a prize to be awarded for a predetermined outcome, and when a game is played on one of the one or more gaming machines and the trigger condition occurs in the game, the prize from the central feature

15   jackpot system is awarded to a player playing the game.

64.   The prize awarding feature as claimed in claim 63, wherein each gaming console includes a signal output means arranged to produce an output signal in response to operation of the respective console, and the central feature jackpot system provides an incrementing jackpot pool which

20   increases in response to signals from the connected consoles and prizes awarded by the central feature jackpot system.
are drawn from the jackpot pool.

65.   A prize awarding feature to selectively provide a feature outcome on one or more gaming consoles associated with a gaming system, wherein the

25   gaming system comprises a gaming network to which are connected each of the gaming consoles and a central feature jackpot system which provides a prize to be awarded, each of the consoles being arranged to offer a feature outcome when a game played on the respective console has achieved a trigger condition, each console including trigger means arranged to test for

30   the trigger condition and to initiate the feature outcome when the trigger condition occurs, the trigger condition being determined by an event having a probability related to desired average turnover between successive occurrences of the trigger conditions on the respective console, and the feature outcome awarding a prize from the central feature system.

35   66.   The prize awarding feature of claim 65, wherein the trigger condition is determined by an event having a probability related both to expected

turnover between successive occurrences of the trigger conditions on the console and the credits bet on the respective game.

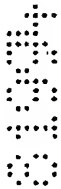67. The random prize awarding features as claimed in claim 1, substantially as hereinbefore described.

68. The gaming console as claimed in claim 25, substantially as hereinbefore described.

69. The method of awarding a prize as claimed in claim 43, substantially as hereinbefore described.

DATED this third day of October 2002

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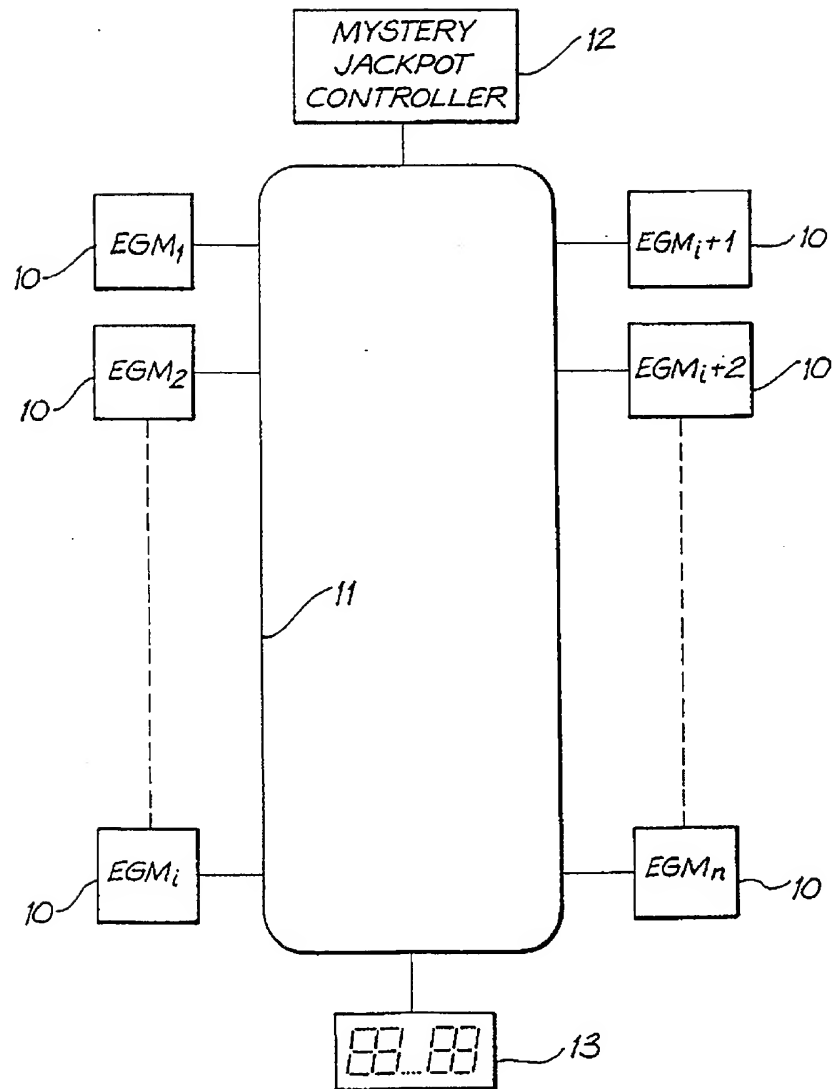Patent Attorneys for the Applicant:
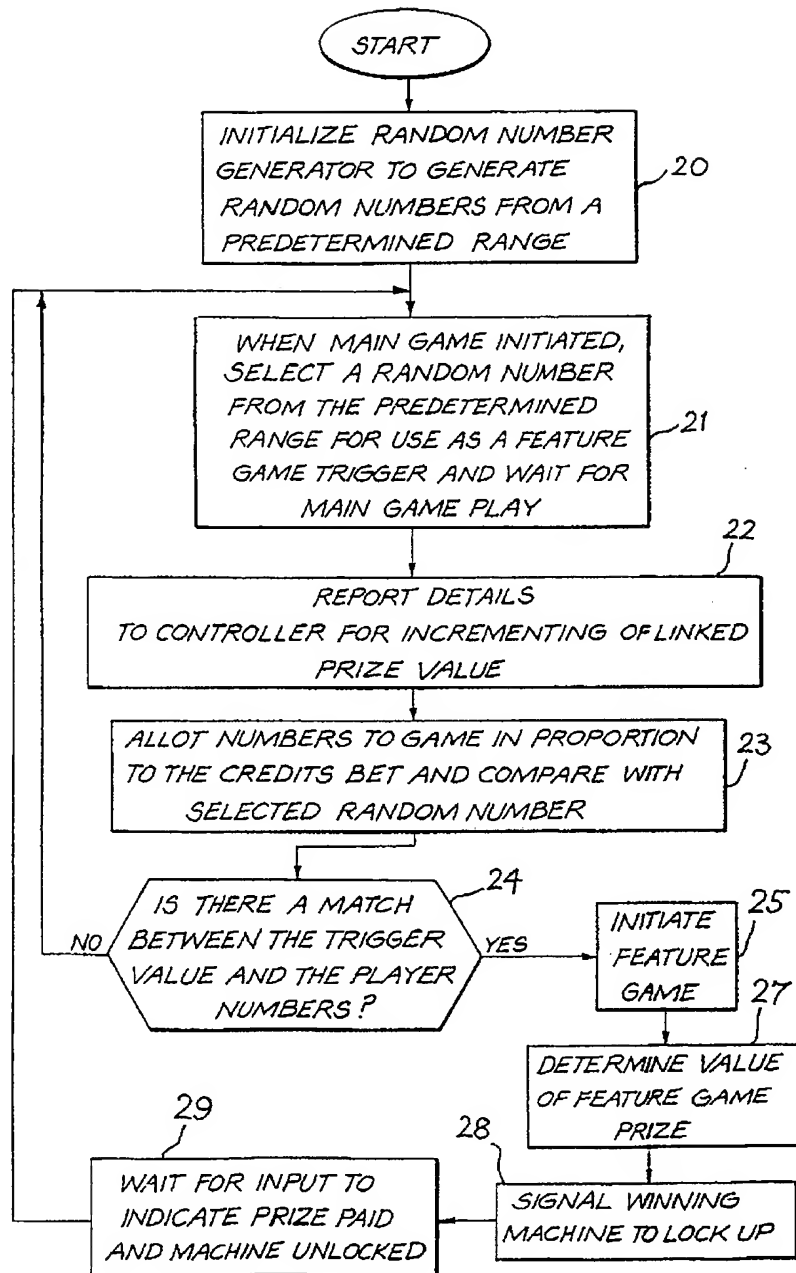
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FIG. 1

```
                          ( START )
                              │
                              ▼
              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │ INITIALIZE RANDOM NUMBER      │
              │ GENERATOR TO GENERATE         │──── 20
              │ RANDOM NUMBERS FROM A         │
              │ PREDETERMINED RANGE           │
              └──────────────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼
              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │ WHEN MAIN GAME INITIATED,     │
              │ SELECT A RANDOM NUMBER        │
              │ FROM THE PREDETERMINED        │
              │ RANGE FOR USE AS A FEATURE    │──── 21
              │ GAME TRIGGER AND WAIT FOR     │
              │ MAIN GAME PLAY                │
              └──────────────────────────────┘
                              │           22
                              ▼
              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │ REPORT DETAILS                │
              │ TO CONTROLLER FOR INCREMENTING OF LINKED │
              │ PRIZE VALUE                   │
              └──────────────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼
              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │ ALLOT NUMBERS TO GAME IN PROPORTION │   23
              │ TO THE CREDITS BET AND COMPARE WITH │
              │ SELECTED RANDOM NUMBER        │
              └──────────────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼                          24
                    ╱──────────────────╲
              NO   ╱ IS THERE A MATCH    ╲      YES      ┌──────────┐  25
          ◄──────< BETWEEN THE TRIGGER    >─────────────►│ INITIATE │
                   ╲ VALUE AND THE PLAYER ╱              │ FEATURE  │
                    ╲ NUMBERS ?          ╱               │ GAME     │
                     ╲──────────────────╱                └──────────┘  27
                                                              │
                                                              ▼
                                                    ┌──────────────────┐
                29                                  │ DETERMINE VALUE  │
                                          28        │ OF FEATURE GAME  │
          ┌──────────────────────┐                 │ PRIZE            │
          │ WAIT FOR INPUT TO     │                 └──────────────────┘
          │ INDICATE PRIZE PAID   │◄────┐                 │
          │ AND MACHINE UNLOCKED  │     │                 ▼
          └──────────────────────┘     │        ┌──────────────────┐
                                        └────────│ SIGNAL WINNING   │
                                                 │ MACHINE TO LOCK UP│
                                                 └──────────────────┘
```

FIG. 2

20	11	11	3	7
12	10	18	13	22
9	12	13	24	9

Figure 3